

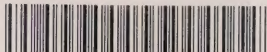
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A SECOND LOOK AT NO FIRST USE

by Fen Osler Hampson



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INTRODUCTION

No first use is not dead. In an important article entitled "Back from the Brink," which appeared in the August 1986 issue of *The Atlantic* magazine,¹ an eminent group of persons proposes that "*The United States should base its military plans, training programs, defense budgets, weapons deployments, and arms negotiations on the assumption that it will not initiate the use of nuclear weapons.*" Although no first use was floated some four years ago,² it was severely criticized by skeptics on both sides of the Atlantic and interest momentarily waned.³ However, it is readily apparent that no first use has found new converts and a new lease on life.

Not only are new arguments mounted in favour of no first use, but they come at a time when North American and European publics hunger for a bold new initiative to reduce the dangers of nuclear war. According to its proponents, "Here is an arms control plan, based on a new nuclear strategy, that requires no negotiations, no treaties, and no verification—a plan that the United States and its allies, taking arms control into their own hands, can implement unilaterally, thereby immediately reducing the risk of a nuclear confrontation." It is a plan that should elicit more than passing interest.

WHAT'S NEW, WHAT'S OLD

There are a number of important new aspects to the most recent proposal for no first use. The first is that no first use is being urged not just for NATO but for *all* US forces deployed around the world. Second, the *timing* is different from previous proposals. A no first use declaration would occur only

after the Alliance had taken whatever measures were necessary to improve its conventional deterrent capabilities. It would also follow a number of prior initiatives, including the elimination of dual-capable launchers (aircraft and artillery), the creation of a separate command and control structure and alert procedures for nuclear forces, and the adoption of a policy of no early second use. Thus, only "when it is ready, [should] the Alliance . . . declare its intention not to be the first to use nuclear weapons . . . The United States should make a similar declaration, or at the very least a declaration of no early use, with respect to American nuclear weapons deployed in other theaters." This is different from earlier formulations which favoured an immediate declaration of no first use.

Finally, the most recent formulation also advocates a policy of no *strategic* first use for the United States, namely, "a commitment not to initiate the use of American nuclear weapons based on the US mainland or at sea." Under this new policy, the United States would forego deployment of the MX missile and the Trident D-5 missile and opt for a drastically reduced strategic arsenal. No strategic first use would "significantly alter targeting criteria and the forces needed to destroy these targets . . . Changes in targeting would reduce the requirement for systems designed to destroy hard targets."

TEN PROPOSITIONS ABOUT NO FIRST USE

The arguments for no first use can be expressed in the form of 10 simplifying propositions. These propositions, which are drawn from the recent article in *The Atlantic*, are listed below and are discussed along with the implications of each.



1. *A consensus has emerged to reduce reliance on nuclear weapons.*

The authors point out that the political context of no first use has changed since the initial proposal was made: "The most noteworthy development since 1982, with respect to the issues raised here, has been a new emphasis on the importance of conventional forces as an alternative to nuclear first use." And they go on to point out that this is reflected not only in President Reagan's official pronouncements on the subject, but also in the statements of prominent religious groups, congressional officials, and even military officials such as the Supreme Allied Commander of NATO forces in Europe, General Bernard W. Rogers, all of whom have urged reduced reliance on nuclear weapons for deterrence.

European attitudes towards no first use have also undergone something of a change. The German opposition SPD party has come out in favour of no first use. The British Labour Party has gone one step further and urged a complete dismantling of Britain's nuclear deterrent and denial of basing rights for American nuclear forces. However, in the political centre one detects little change in opinion towards no first use and the governments of West Germany and Britain have yet to express much enthusiasm for the idea.

Among those favouring reduced reliance on nuclear weapons, there are critical differences about how to proceed. For some, reduced reliance means drastic cuts in nuclear stockpiles. To others, cuts are not as important as reducing the vulnerability of particular systems in their current basing modes. But more profound differences emerge about what to do in the long run. For some, technology will provide the ultimate answer. Ronald Reagan, for example, believes that the answer lies in the development of strategic defences. But the authors of this most recent declaration reject this approach and believe that no first use precludes the development of strategic defences. There is an obvious consensus about goals but little consensus about means, a fact which will make the task of reducing reliance on nuclear weapons doubly difficult. Proponents of no first use will have to build a consensus around means as well as ends.

2. *No first use will reduce the risks of nuclear war in a major political crisis.*

A mere declaration of no first use would do little to reduce the risks of nuclear war unless it resulted in a change in operational policy. The authors recognize the obvious importance of integrating no first use "into all aspects of military planning" in order to "reduce the risk that nuclear weapons

would be used in the heat of crisis. . . [and the] political tensions that give rise to such crises." By not mixing nuclear weapons with conventional forces (as they are now), the risk of an unauthorized use of nuclear weapons would be reduced.⁴ The effect on nuclear weapons deployed at sea would be particularly dramatic. Nuclear weapons on US surface ships and submarines do not have the same electronic locks (known as permissive action links) as weapons deployed on land. Many believe the risks of inadvertent nuclear escalation at sea to be higher than they are elsewhere.⁵

In assessing the impact of no first use, however, it is important to consider the impact of such a policy on the probability not just of nuclear war but war itself. Unless no first use resulted in a credible conventional deterrent, the probability of war might go up in a political crisis if the Soviets were to believe, for whatever reason, that military force could be used without risking nuclear war, even though this is not their policy now. Thus, although the risks of nuclear war might well go down with no first use, the risk of war itself might not in certain circumstances. As the proponents of no first use recognize, the ultimate success of a no first use policy will depend upon the strength of the conventional deterrent.

There is a critical tradeoff between efforts to reduce the risks of nuclear war if deterrence fails and efforts to prevent deterrence from failing in the first place. The threat of nuclear retaliation may be good for deterrence and encourage a potential aggressor to think twice before he acts, but the risks of implementation (if deterrence fails) are considerable and other military options (like a conventional response) might be preferable. The way these tradeoffs are addressed is a supremely political question.

Western Europeans have traditionally placed a higher premium on nuclear deterrence, whereas Americans have tended to put a higher value on flexible nuclear and conventional options if deterrence fails.⁶ What Europeans fear is war itself and a modern conventional war would be far more devastating than any war Europe has hitherto experienced. To the extent that nuclear weapons deter war in general by raising the spectre of escalation, they are seen as good things. To many Americans, escalation to major nuclear war is something to be avoided for obvious reasons. If wars must be fought, they must be contained and terminated before they escalate to the American homeland. In this sense, no first use does not mark a departure from American strategic thought, it is in fact quite consistent with a tradition that has sought to limit and contain any potential conflict with policies of 'flexible response' and 'limited nuclear options.' It may be that no first use is worth the price of a reduction in 'theoretical' deterrence compared to the benefits of lowering the

risks of escalation and major nuclear war. But the tradeoff has to be confronted squarely and where such core values are involved it is important to recognize that opinions on either side of the Atlantic differ.

3. *Nuclear weapons are not militarily effective.*

"The fundamental problem with the current first-use policy is that it misconstrues the nature of nuclear weapons. It assumes that nuclear weapons can fulfill conventional war-fighting roles. But even their most limited use carries an unacceptable risk of escalation to general nuclear war." Although this is almost certainly true, it is also the case that nuclear weapons have acquired a special military role and mission. The *threat* to use nuclear weapons on the battlefield enormously complicates military planning and operations for any would-be aggressor. They make it extremely risky to mass troops along the front of attack because troop concentrations present such lucrative targets. Logistics and follow-on troop support are also complicated by the prospect of conducting operations in an 'integrated' nuclear environment.⁷ Nuclear weapons *do* serve a military purpose. And the fact that they do is reflected in Soviet military planning and operations.⁸ If they did not, the Soviets would not be quite so anxious to pre-empt NATO theatre nuclear capabilities if war broke out. According to Stephen Meyer, "Soviet military planning stresses that the most important mission for all Soviet general purpose forces (and possibly chemical forces) during. . . [the] conventional phase would be to destroy NATO nuclear forces in the theater. . . this includes conventional air strikes, chemical attacks, and special operations missions against British and French forces."⁹ As long as these weapons are there the Soviets have to contend with the possibility they might be used against them.

The proponents of no first use implicitly recognize that the real issue is a political one. Would NATO's political leadership authorize a first use of nuclear weapons in the event that war broke out? How would NATO's leaders calculate the risks of escalation in a crisis? How would the Soviets respond? Unfortunately, when it comes to these questions no one can really second guess what would happen and that is what the proponents of no first use (and others) find so troubling. Although NATO has devised methods and procedures for consultation regarding the use of nuclear weapons nobody knows how well they would work, if at all. It is quite possible that an American president would not have the time to consult with the allies and would have to take the decision on his own. No first use would ensure that he could not make a positive

decision unless, of course, NATO was attacked first with nuclear weapons. Thus, no first use would have its most decisive effect on NATO's *political* machinery.

However, in addressing the political question it is important not to ignore the military aspects and the important role assigned to nuclear weapons on the battlefield. Are there effective military substitutes for nuclear weapons that would complicate the battlefield operations and planning of a would-be aggressor? How would such weapons be deployed? In what numbers? How much would they cost? Fortunately, a new generation of smart *conventional* weapons that make use of special technologies for guidance and target acquisition is in the process of being developed.¹⁰ Some of these technologies may be able to substitute for the important role currently played by NATO's tactical nuclear forces. But their development has not been without controversy and it will be some time before systems that can effectively perform this role will be deployed.¹¹

4. *First use has undermined NATO's conventional deterrent.*

Robert McNamara, one of the co-authors of the *Atlantic* article, is quoted approvingly for having stated that "the reliance on NATO's nuclear threats for deterrence makes it more difficult to muster the political and financial support necessary to sustain an adequate conventional defense." He identifies the fact that nuclear weapons have become a crutch, enabling the allies to eschew much-needed improvements in NATO's conventional deterrent capabilities.

Will the allies find the necessary resources and political will to muster an adequate conventional defence under no first use? It is useful to recall that the main reason for the development of NATO's tactical nuclear capabilities back in the early 1950s was precisely because these resources could not be found. In view of the economic and fiscal problems that many of NATO's members are facing, is there reason to suppose that these resources could be obtained now? The question is not just a rhetorical one. Some of the allies are being forced to scale down their military commitments because of fiscal and budgetary pressures. According to the authors of "Back from the Brink," a formal commitment to no first use would help cut through the formidable domestic political and economic obstacles that exist throughout the Alliance and bring about the major increases in defence spending that a credible conventional deterrent and no first use policy would entail. But, as one observer points out, it is important not to underestimate "the near-term diffi-

culties, both political and military, in bringing about the revolutionary shift in the European conventional balance that would be required to make no first use a viable doctrine. . . . Only an *unprecedented* [my emphasis] effort to increase the number of NATO combat-ready units and the amount of weaponry at their disposal will bring about the type of *fundamental* changes in NATO's conventional capabilities that might make no first use an attractive option."¹²

5. *First use has weakened the Alliance.*

The authors of the *Atlantic* article state that "NATO's first-use policy, rather than providing a foundation for a united and self-confident defense, has become a growing source of distrust and dissension." And they go on to argue that "as long as the United States relies on nuclear weapons to 'reassure' its allies, it will be caught in conflicting European currents: on the one hand, concern that the United States would not employ nuclear weapons soon enough and, on the other hand, concern that the United States would use them readily."

Nuclear weapons and employment policies for their use are at the heart of much of the debate within the Alliance. Recent concerns have focused on the deployment of intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) in Europe, and the debate may be rekindled if the United States and the Soviet Union decide to remove them as part of a new arms control package.

The nuclear controversy dates to the formation of the Alliance; it is not new. Are current differences worse than before? Much depends upon the perspective of the observer. Some would argue that the debates in the early 1960s about flexible response and MLF (the multilateral nuclear force) were just as divisive, if not more so, as the recent debate over the deployment of the Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles in Europe. Moreover, the Alliance came through the INF decision relatively intact whereas the debate in the sixties saw the withdrawal of a key Alliance member, France, from NATO's integrated military command structure. Historical comparisons about the relative health of the Alliance are difficult to make. And recent surveys of public opinion show that public support for NATO continues to remain strong despite the growth of the peace and anti-nuclear movements.¹³

The dilemmas of abandonment or entrapment are endemic to the Alliance and, although nuclear weapons are a lightening rod for the expression of these twin fears, geopolitics lies at the root of the problem. Even in a world without nuclear weapons, an Alliance based on countries lying an ocean apart

is bound to suffer these doubts. Could Europe ever be certain that the United States would come to its defence even if the risk was only that of conventional war? The United States was quite reluctant to come to the immediate defence of its friends in two major world wars—and both those wars were fought without nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons have heightened those fears (would the United States risk self-destruction to defend its allies?), but they are not its cause. The same also holds true about the dilemmas of entrapment and Western Europe being dragged into a conflict because of the adventurous actions of its North American partner (or vice versa). Reassurance will be a continuing requirement even with no first use. The allies will never feel completely secure under the American security guarantee.

6. *US troops in Europe are more important to alliance cohesion than nuclear weapons.*

Troops are an important tripwire and this is an important source of reassurance and alliance cohesion.¹⁴ The authors of "Back from the Brink" go on to suggest that: "If our allies require additional reassurance, then a formal permanent commitment of US forces to the defense of Europe may offer the best evidence that a desire to reduce reliance on nuclear weapons does not indicate a reduction of the US commitment to the security of its European allies." This may be a desirable objective in itself with or without no first use, and it might help to stem pressures in the American Congress and elsewhere which seek to reduce American troop commitments to Europe, particularly if Western Europeans are not more forthcoming with their own defence effort.

The key question, however, is how much will be required in manpower and conventional weaponry to build a credible conventional deterrent? Will the United States be required to increase its troop levels and conventional defence commitments to Western Europe? As John Mearsheimer points out, "if the full burden of deterrence were shifted to conventional forces, they would have to be judged by a higher standard than obtains with nuclear weapons."¹⁵ Richard Betts also underscores the point well: "Confidence in conventional deterrence by defense is unwarranted because denial is inherently a weaker deterrent than punishment—the costs of failure are much smaller. Without a nuclear threat, the weighing of risks is . . . more tilted in favor of attack [even] if Soviet motives are defensive . . . It is more tempting to gamble against a moderately high probability of denial than against a moderately low probability of devastation."¹⁶ The implication of these arguments is not only that conventional force

improvements *will* be necessary to decrease the chances that a conventional assault on NATO would succeed, but also that such improvements may never fully compensate in pure deterrent value for the threat of nuclear war that any Soviet leader contemplating aggression faces today.

If additional resources are required for the Europe's defence under no first use, it is not entirely clear where the manpower and resources will come from, not only because of countervailing political and economic pressures in the United States, like Gramm-Rudman-Hollings and budgetary and trade deficits, but also because US military forces committed to other corners of the globe are also in competition for scarce resources.

7. *If NATO adopts an operational no first use policy, then the Soviets will too.*

According to the authors of the new no first use proposal, "[a] NATO shift in policy, after being reflected in NATO force planning, might encourage Soviet leaders to adhere to their own declaration of no first use and might reduce their incentives to launch pre-emptive attacks on NATO's nuclear assets in a time of crisis." It is useful to recall that the Soviets declared their own commitment to no first use in 1982. Although it has not had a perceptible effect on their force deployments, the question of whether their behaviour would change, if NATO reciprocated, is an important one.

To the extent that NATO's tactical and theatre nuclear assets are vulnerable to pre-emptive attacks, the Soviet incentive to pre-empt will always exist. There is little doubt that most of NATO's current nuclear assets (both weapons and their launchers) are vulnerable, although exactly how much is a matter of some contention. A no first use policy which had the effect of reducing this vulnerability, either by encouraging the development of new basing modes or eliminating certain systems entirely, would reduce the incentives for pre-emption and its net effect would be beneficial. But it should be readily apparent that this could be done *without* such a declaration. No first use is not a precondition for a reduction in vulnerability, although a reduction in vulnerability is almost certainly a necessary precondition for a credible no first use policy.

Whether the Soviets would change their own basing modes or eliminate certain systems in response to NATO no first use is difficult to predict in advance. Similarly questions about Soviet tactical use of nuclear weapons cannot be readily answered, although NATO no first use would place the burden of escalation on the Soviets which is all for the good.

The key question, however, has to do with the

Soviet response to a possible NATO build-up of conventional forces that might be necessary to make no first use credible and compensate for a reduction in the nuclear deterrent. Would the Soviets sit by idly waiting for the balance of forces to shift? Or would they try to match NATO's effort with their own? A NATO effort to remedy perceived deficiencies in the conventional balance would almost certainly meet with a Soviet and Warsaw Pact counter-response. Thus, under some circumstances, no first use might paradoxically do little to halt the arms race and could even accelerate it. Unless no first use is coupled with successful arms control that keeps the lid on conventional force and troop levels, its ultimate effect on the balance might well be pernicious. A race to address perceived deficiencies in the conventional force structure would be extremely costly for both sides—and certainly far more costly than the race in nuclear weaponry now. Arms control and no first use must therefore go in tandem and the statement that no first use "requires no negotiations, no treaties, and no verification" may be premature.

8. *No first use should be preceded by no early use and no early second use.*

According to the proponents of no first use, "As an initial measure the Western alliance could adopt a policy of no early use. A no-early-use policy would improve the effectiveness of existing conventional forces by increasing their flexibility and lightening the burden of nuclear-weapons safety and control procedures." They also urge that "As another interim measure NATO could halt any weapons-modernization programs, such as those to produce and deploy new generations of nuclear artillery shells, that are predicated on a strategy of early use of its nuclear arsenal." And they go on to suggest that "A logical next step would be a policy of no early second use. This would enhance stability by requiring that the United States and its allies identify the location, source, and extent of any nuclear explosion before responding."

NATO has already begun to move in this direction. NATO began to draw down its tactical nuclear stockpile by 1,000 warheads in 1979 and it agreed to eliminate 1,400 warheads at the Montebello meeting in 1983. By 1988 NATO will have reduced its nuclear inventory from 7,000 warheads to 4,500. Similarly, NATO has begun to upgrade its command, control, and communications infrastructure thereby improving its tactical assessment capabilities.

The shift to no early first use represents "a subtle change in emphasis from deterrence through the prospective dynamic of battlefield escalation to in-

creased reliance on deterrence through the threat of a calculated response, perhaps against Soviet territory.”¹⁷ This places an added burden on the survivability, controllability, and targeting flexibility of NATO’s nuclear forces “at a time when Soviet capabilities for circumscribing Alliance nuclear options are more pronounced than at any point in the history of the Alliance.”¹⁸

9. *No first use should be followed by no strategic first use.*

One of the more radical and novel suggestions in the recent proposal is to follow no first use with “a policy of no strategic first use—a commitment not to initiate the use of American strategic weapons based on the US mainland or sea.” As the authors of this proposal are ready to admit, “Adoption of a no-strategic-first-use policy would have profound consequences. It would mean, first, that there would be no rationale for deploying highly vulnerable systems—for example, the MX missile—that could not survive a first strike. Second, it would significantly alter targeting criteria and the forces needed to destroy those targets. Under an assumption of no strategic first use the United States would not require the capability to destroy large numbers of Soviet ‘hard’ targets. Only a small number of hard targets could be usefully hit in a US second strike. . . . Only a disarming first strike could possibly catch the Soviet missiles in their silos.” The authors of “Back from the Brink” go on to point out that “Changes in targeting would reduce the requirements for systems to destroy hard targets. It would also make certain additional systems, such as the Trident D-5, unnecessary, since their main function is to supplement this capability.”

The consequences of no strategic first use are profound indeed and it is outside the scope of this brief survey to examine them here. However, a number of key questions can be tagged for future consideration.

What are the underlying assumptions about escalation and war termination in no strategic first use? The United States nuclear arsenals have evolved to provide greater flexibility in targeting and limited nuclear options. Thus, if the Soviet Union were to launch a limited nuclear attack against US forces, the United States would be able to respond, in theory, at some level short of a major nuclear exchange. Some would argue that based on what we know about Soviet strategic doctrine, the Soviets would never resort to limited nuclear attacks; if they were to launch an attack against the United States it would be a massive one. Thus, an American counter-attack would simply be an attack against empty silos. Moreover, to the extent that the United States possesses a

vulnerable, hard-target kill capability, it will simply encourage the Soviets to launch a massive, pre-emptive attack in a crisis. Either scenario is difficult to prove or disprove. But each has profound implications for the kind of forces that would be required to perform each set of missions. For those who believe in the possibility of limited nuclear war, a certain amount of prompt, hard-target kill capability is essential. But if this possibility is not realistic, as others contend, then this capability is not necessary. The proponents of no strategic first use side with the latter viewpoint. But one should realize it rests on a set of core assumptions or beliefs about the nature of nuclear war that not all would share.

What are the moral assumptions in no strategic first use about targeting policy? Faced with a limited nuclear attack or the prospects of war where the use of nuclear weapons seemed imminent, which would be the morally defensible position: an attack on cities or an attack against the adversary’s military forces? Most would opt for the second on the grounds of just war theory and the innocence of non-combatants,¹⁹ although in actual practice the distinction may be somewhat blurred because of the collateral damage and civilian casualties that would result from the use of nuclear weapons on the battlefield, particularly in Central Europe. Nevertheless, the principle is one that most would (and should) strive for. To the extent that a flexible and relatively prompt retaliatory capability provides this option, i.e., to attack the adversary’s military forces rather than his cities, most would argue that this is an option worth retaining—at least until one can abolish nuclear weapons or replace them with something that would preserve deterrence but would be less catastrophic if deterrence failed.

Once can argue about the merits of particular weapons systems, but *moral* criteria should be observed along with traditional strategic concerns such as crisis stability and arms control. The proponents of no strategic first use need to address more fully the moral implications of their argument and to explain not only what kinds of forces would meet the requirements of their proposal (in positive terms) but also how those forces would be used. Until they do so, they will be vulnerable to the charge that their ‘minimum deterrent’ has far worse moral implications than a deterrent which allows for counterforce capabilities and eschews the destruction of cities except as targets of last resort.

10. *No first use is incompatible with the Strategic Defense Initiative.*

The authors of “Back from the Brink” go to some lengths to distance themselves from President

Reagan's 'Star Wars' plan. They state that "the policy of no first use presupposes abandonment of the Strategic Defense Initiative. Although we share the President's hope for a diminished reliance on nuclear arms, we do not believe that his proposals will safely take us in that direction." And they go on to argue that "The Strategic Defense Initiative threatens to erode allied unity, and confidence in American guarantees, by raising the prospect of a 'decoupling' of Western Europe from the United States."

Whatever their reasons for rejecting SDI—and they are undoubtedly good ones—no first use is surely not the basis for it. President Reagan has repeatedly asserted that strategic defences, regardless of the form they ultimately take, will reduce the incentive to strike first and perhaps eliminate the need for nuclear weapons entirely. The Administration has also raised the possibility of extending this shield to Europe, perhaps with anti-tactical ballistic defences (ATBMs). (Again, its position is that ATBMs would reinforce a no first use policy for NATO.)

If no first use is inconsistent with the objectives of SDI, its critics will have to make this clear and explain why. On the face of it, there is little reason to suppose the two objectives are all that far apart, technical, political, or strategic considerations notwithstanding.

This should not be interpreted as endorsement of SDI but rather as a question about the logic of the professed incompatibility of no first use with the objectives set forth in President Reagan's plan to move to a defence-dominant world.

CONCLUSION

In their recent declaration, the new "gang of ten" have contributed some refreshing new ideas to the debate over no first use, particularly in their proposals for no early second use and no strategic first use. But these are changes which are major and, in the latter case, have profound implications not just for NATO but also for US strategic policy. They are ideas which merit more than the cursory treatment that they have received so far, and they will have to be scrutinized closely before they can be taken seriously. Nevertheless, in the search for a way out of the nuclear dilemma, the authors of "Beyond the Brink" have made a useful beginning.

Much has changed since no first use was initially put on the Alliance agenda. When the proposal was first made it was criticized on the grounds that it failed to confront adequately pressing political and economic realities. Although even the critics were willing to concede that the objective of moving towards a no first use posture was indeed a desirable

one for the Alliance, they raised fundamental concerns about *means* and the political feasibility of improving NATO's conventional capabilities to provide a deterrent that would replace the nuclear and, at the same time, reassure the allies.

Although it is true that NATO's nuclear allergy has grown in the past few years to the point where some Europeans favour no first use or more radical steps towards nuclear disarmament, fundamental political and economic realities have not changed. One sees little evidence that a new political will has emerged that would permit NATO to make the conventional force improvements which might be necessary for a credible conventional deterrent under no first use. More importantly perhaps, while there is a growing consensus about the need to reduce reliance on nuclear weapons, there are marked differences of opinion about how to proceed. No first use will have to be examined alongside other proposals, like President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative, which seeks to do away with nuclear weapons altogether.

The specific requirements for a credible conventional defence under no first use will also have to be examined. Although assessments of the military balance differ, there is little doubt that the requirements for conventional deterrence will be more rigorous and exacting than they are now under policies which rely on the risk of nuclear retaliation and escalation. The advocates of no first use will have to make clear exactly what their policy will entail in the way of conventional force improvements to provide for a credible deterrent.

The Soviet response to such 'improvements' will also have to be considered. If a build-up of conventional forces was necessary to make no first use credible, would the Soviets and their Warsaw Pact allies not try to match NATO with a build-up of their own thereby stimulating a new arms race? No first use might certainly help to improve the political atmosphere between these rival alliances. But arms control may be an important prerequisite if a race in conventional arms is to be avoided in the movement to no first use—a requirement which its advocates eschew.

In making the case for no first use, its advocates must also be careful not to re-write history. NATO's reliance on nuclear weapons did not emerge out of nowhere. It exists because the Alliance perceived that it had neither the will nor the resources to cope with a threat that seemed real enough and shows little sign of abating. In the process, nuclear weapons assumed a political and military role. It is clear that their political purpose is in jeopardy, but changes in declaratory policy will also have to address the political roots of the problem which go deeper than the nuclear allergy.

NOTES

1. McGeorge Bundy, Morton H. Halperin, William W. Kaufmann, George F. Kennan, Robert S. McNamara, Madelene O'Donnell, Leon V. Sigal, Gerard C. Smith, Richard H. Ullman, and Paul C. Warnke, "Back from the Brink," *The Atlantic*, Vol. 258, No. 2, August 1986.
2. See McGeorge Bundy, George F. Kennan, Robert S. McNamara, and Gerard C. Smith, "Nuclear Weapons and the Atlantic Alliance," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 1, Spring 1982, pp. 753-768.
3. See, *inter alia*, Karl Kaiser, and others, "Nuclear Weapons and the Preservation of Peace: A German Response," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 5, Summer 1982, pp. 1157-1170; John J. Mearsheimer, "Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence in Europe," *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 3, Winter 1984/85, pp. 19-46; and Richard K. Betts, "Compound Deterrence vs. No-First-Use: What's Wrong is What's Right," *Orbis*, Vol. 20, No. 4, Winter 1985, pp. 697-718.
4. It is important to distinguish between the inadvertent or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons in a political crisis and during war itself. The risks would be negligible in a political crisis and would only exist if release authority had already been delegated to the field commanders—a decision that would be tantamount to ordering the use of the weapons themselves. Furthermore, even if the weapons were placed under the command of a special separate military authority, the same potential dangers of inadvertent use would exist once the release codes had been given out.
5. See, for example, Fen Osler Hampson, "Escalation in Europe," in Graham T. Allison, Albert Carnesale, and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., eds., *Hawks, Doves, and Owls: An Agenda for Avoiding Nuclear War*, W.W. Norton, New York, 1985, pp. 91-92; and Desmond Ball, "Nuclear War at Sea," *International Security*, Vol. 10, No. 3, Winter 1985/86, pp. 3-31.
6. For an excellent historical treatment of these issues see Gregory F. Treverton, *Making the Alliance Work: The United States and Western Europe*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1985.
7. See Joseph D. Douglass, Jr., and Amoretta H. Hoerber, *Conventional War and Escalation: The Soviet View*, Crane Russak, New York, 1981.
8. This is because military planning is always conducted on the basis of *capabilities* rather than *intentions*.
9. Stephen M. Meyer, "Soviet Perspectives on the Paths to Nuclear War," in Allison, Carnesale, and Nye, eds., *Hawks, Doves, and Owls*, p. 183.
10. See Report of the European Security Study (ESECs), *Strengthening Conventional Deterrence in Europe: Proposals for the 1980s*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1983.
11. See Fen Osler Hampson, "NATO's conventional doctrine: the limits of technological improvement," *International Journal*, Vol. 61, No. 1, Winter 1985/86, pp. 159-188.
12. Jay Kosminsky, "European Nuclear Security: Beyond Current Dilemmas," in Stephen J. Flanagan and Fen Osler Hampson, eds., *Securing Europe's Future*, Auburn House, Boston, 1986, p. 14.
13. See Gregory Flynn and Hans Rattinger, eds., *The Public and the Atlantic Alliance*, Rowman and Allanheld, London, 1985; and Robert E. Hunter, ed., *NATO—The Next Generation*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1984.
14. Whether troops are a more important tripwire than nuclear weapons is controversial. Some would argue that the risk of nuclear escalation to the homelands of the superpowers is more important. Thus, the recent deployment of the Pershing II missile in Europe, which is capable of striking targets in the Soviet Union, was justified on the grounds that it would strengthen extended deterrence and the American nuclear guarantee, particularly since the Soviets have made it clear that they would view any attack on their territory as "strategic."
15. Mearsheimer, "Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence in Europe," p. 20.
16. Richard K. Betts, "Conventional Deterrence: Predictive Uncertainty and Policy Confidence," *World Politics*, Vol. 37, No. 2, January 1985, pp. 177-8.
17. Kosminsky, "European Nuclear Security," p. 17.
18. *Ibid.*
19. For an outstanding exposition and application of this ethical principle to strategic theory, see Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Nuclear Ethics*, Free Press, New York, 1986.

Fen Hampson is currently a research associate at the Institute and a member of the faculty at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University. He was formerly a member of the 'Arms Control' and 'Avoiding Nuclear War' projects at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

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